

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 256 971

CG 012 193

AUTHOR Anselmi, Dina L.; Smith, Kathleen M.
TITLE Gender Differences in Career, Marriage and Family Expectations of College Students.
PUB DATE Aug 84
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (92nd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 24-28, 1984).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Careers; *College Students; Employed Women; Expectation; *Family Life; Higher Education; Life Style; *Marriage; *Role Perception; *Sex Differences; Values

ABSTRACT

While women are more involved in work outside the home and changes in traditional role orientations are occurring, the nature and extent of such changes remain unclear. A questionnaire was administered to 126 male and 94 female college students to examine their career, marriage, and family expectations. The results indicated that although career, marriage, and family were all very important to both men and women, women rated marriage as more important than did men and men were more likely to expect to have a career at age 40 than were women. In the area of occupational aspirations, business, social science, and law had the highest frequencies for females, while business, medicine, and computers had the highest frequencies for males. Women were more likely to see themselves doing housework, part-time work, or volunteer work, whereas men were likely to see themselves employed full-time. Men rated prestige and salary as important reasons for occupational choice, while women emphasized a pleasant work setting and social interactions. Data on the relationship of marriage and family to career showed that men were more willing than women to relocate, work overtime, and work weekends for their own careers. (NRB)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED256971

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CAREER, MARRIAGE AND
FAMILY EXPECTATIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

Dina L. Anselmi
Kathleen M. Smith
Trinity College

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

X Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Dina L. Anselmi

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association,
Toronto, Canada, August 24-28, 1984.

Gender differences in career, marriage and family expectations of college students.

Dina L. Anselmi and Kathleen M. Smith

Trinity College, Hartford, CT 06106

Paper Presented at the 92nd Annual Convention of the American
Psychological Association at Toronto, Canada, August 1984

Statement of the Problem

There is the popular belief that traditional sex roles are changing. The areas of work, marriage, and family are a major focus of many of these changes. More women are now entering the work force as well as working in traditionally male dominated fields (Waite, 1981; Cuplan & Marzotta, 1982; Baruch, Barnett & Rivers, 1983). In addition to, and in part perhaps a result of these changes in women's occupational involvement and mobility in their careers, there have been changes in marriage and family relationships. It has been speculated that the changes in male and female role orientations are one reason for the decrease in family size and the increase in the number of childless women and divorces (Mason, Czajka & Arber, 1976). In an extensive study of women's views about work and personal relationships, Baruch, Barnett & Rivers (1983) found that "doing and achieving at something are at least as important to the lives of most women as are relationships and feelings". While participating in work outside of the home may be important for many women, several researchers have claimed that marriage and family responsibilities can adversely affect women's career opportunities (Hudis, 1978; Houseknecht & Macke, 1981). The effects

range from more frequent leaves of absence to maximizing job benefits such as work hours and job distance in accordance with children at home. In addition, several recent surveys of teenagers indicate that there are still significant differences in the types of occupations they aspire towards and in the needs they seek to satisfy in their chosen profession (Garrison, 1979; Herzog, 1982; Lueptow, 1980). Males emphasize money, power and autonomy while females focus on interpersonal and altruistic concerns in their choice of occupation. Importantly, Lueptow (1980) did not find any sign that the gap between the sexes is narrowing in relation to their attitude about the future. These findings are especially interesting given that the students surveyed were socialized during the time when the first major change in sex roles are believed to have occurred, yet those changes are not reflected in the teenagers' views about their future.

Therefore, while women are more involved in work outside the home and changes in traditional role orientations are occurring, the nature and extent of such changes remain unclear. The purpose of the present study was to explore the career, marriage and family expectations of male and female college students. This population was targeted because college is typically thought of as a time of identity consolidation and one would expect to find a large percentage of individuals who are career oriented. We predicted that there would be fewer differences between college males and females than were found with high school students. We still did expect to find family and marriage issues more salient for women as opposed to men.

Methods

A questionnaire was administered to 220 male (n=126) and female (n=94) students at a traditional liberal arts college. The mean age was 20.2. The questions were designated to measure college students' future plans and attitudes and were grouped into three categories. All questions involving ratings were based on a 5 pt. scale.

A. Importance of Career, Marriage, and Family. The subjects were asked to rate the importance of career, marriage and family in relation to their future and how likely it was that these factors would be part of their lives at age forty.

B. Occupational Items. Subjects were asked to indicate their occupational aspirations. They were asked to rate how likely they were to participate in the following types of work: housework, full-time work (outside the home), volunteer work and part-time work. Subjects also indicated how important certain factors such as salary, prestige, satisfaction, social interactions and pleasant work settings were in their career choice.

C. Relationship of Marriage and Family to Occupation. In respect to their career, subjects were asked to indicate how willing they were to do certain things for their own career, to encourage their spouse to do for his/her own career, or to do for their career if they had children. The factors included willingness to relocate, work weekends, work overtime, and travel.

Results

All questions with rating scales were evaluated with one-way ANOVA's to examine the effects of gender.

A. Importance of Career, Marriage and Family. Males and females rated all three areas as very important for their future. The only differences were that females rated marriage as more important than males ($p < .01$) and males thought they were more likely to have a career at age 40 than were females ($p < .0001$).

B. Occupational Items. The chosen occupations were coded into 9 categories: arts, business, communication, computers, law, medicine, public administration, social services and other. A Chi Square analysis revealed a significant effect ($p < .001$). Business, social science and law had the highest frequencies for females while business, medicine and computers had the highest

frequencies for males. The greatest difference between males and females occurred in the law and social services categories.

In terms of the types of work both men and women picture themselves doing, all categories were significant ($p < .001$). The means are presented in Table 1. Women were more likely to see themselves doing housework, part-time work, or volunteer work whereas men were likely to see themselves doing full-time work. With regard to the reasons for occupational choice, significant differences ($p < .01$) were also found. Men rated prestige and salary as more important whereas females emphasized pleasant work setting and social interactions. The means are shown in Table 2.

C. Relationship of Marriage and Family to Career. Several significant effects emerged in terms of what males and females were willing to do for their own career if they have a spouse, their spouse's career, and if they expect to have children ($p < .001$). The means are presented in Tables 3, 4 & 5. Males were more willing to relocate, work overtime and weekends for their own career than were females. On the other hand, females were more willing to relocate for their spouse's career. With respect to children, females were less willing to work weekends, work overtime and travel for their own career than were men.

Discussion

While there were fewer differences than expected, all the differences were in the expected direction. The pattern of results can help us to understand some of the changes in attitudes about career, marriage and family. Both males and females see career, marriage and family as important, although not surprisingly, females emphasize marriage more and males the career area.

While there is some traditional career choice (social services), the law is quite popular with women as opposed to men. Also, both men and women choose business quite frequently. This contrasts with the findings from high school students but is what we had anticipated in terms of the socializing influence

of college.

In examining the other results, a somewhat different if more subtle pattern emerges. When asked specific questions about work or reasons for occupational choice as well as what they are willing to do for their career in various situations, some traditional differences between males and females are evident. Women view housework, part-time work and volunteer work as more likely than men, who focus on full-time work. So, while college females want a career, they also picture themselves doing work that is often incompatible, or at least difficult to coordinate with a career. It may be that when women speak of a career, they have a different conception than what is associated with a traditional male career. Women may be willing to work at a job, which may or may not be a traditional career, but which would allow them to maximize job and personal achievement considerations. For example, some women are willing to work part-time (and call that a career) so that they can still assume the major responsibility for child rearing (Baruch, Barnett, & Rivers, 1983).

Traditional differences are still found in respect to reasons for career choice with females emphasizing social and interpersonal considerations and males focusing on prestige and salary. This is particularly interesting given the types of careers that these women aspire towards. Law and business, traditionally male dominated fields, are associated with power and prestige (and often high salaries) rather than optimizing interpersonal satisfaction. Perhaps we will see a change in what is emphasized in those jobs, or more likely, as women actually participate in those careers, they will come to adopt the more traditional male values.

The clearest differences are found in terms of what males and females are willing to do for their career. Women are still less willing to work overtime, to work on weekends and relocate than are men. They are, however, willing to relocate for their spouse, which was a traditional expectation for women when

families were focused totally on the husband's career. In regard to children, women are clearly less willing to engage in many of the behaviors that are generally linked to career mobility and success. This is consistent with the findings that show women maximize job considerations in relation to their family obligations (Hudis, 1978). In summary, the results show that while males and females may want career, marriage, and family, there are important differences in how they will achieve each. The results also emphasize the need to look at several different groups in order to accurately describe and understand current attitudes about career, marriage and family.

Table 1
Means for the Ratings of Occupational Types
as a Function of Gender*

<u>Occupational Types</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
A. Housework	2.3	3.1
B. Full-time work	4.8	4.3
C. Volunteer work	2.8	3.2
D. Part-time work	1.9	3.1

Table 2
Means for Ratings of Importance of Factor
for Career Choice*

<u>Importance for Career Choice</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
A. Prestige	3.7	3.4
B. Salary	4.1	3.8
C. Pleasant work setting	4.2	4.4
D. Social interactions	4.0	4.4

Table 3
Means for Ratings of Willingness for Own Career
Factors as a Function of Gender*

<u>Willingness for Own Career Factors</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
A. Relocation	3.6	3.2
B. Work weekends	3.5	3.1
C. Work overtime	4.0	3.6
D. Travel	4.0	3.8

Table 4
Means for Ratings of Willingness for Spouse's
Career Factors as a Function of Gender*

<u>Willingness for Spouse's Career Factors</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
A. Relocation	3.2	3.6
B. Work weekends	3.0	3.0
C. Work overtime	3.3	3.3
D. Travel	3.3	3.4

Table 5
Means for Ratings of Willingness if Have Children
Factors as a Function of Gender*

<u>Willingness if Have Children Factors</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
A. Relocation	3.2	3.0
B. Work weekends	3.2	2.6
C. Work overtime	3.4	2.8
D. Travel	3.4	2.9

*Based on a 5-pt. scale

References

- Baruch, G., Barnett, R., & Rivers, C. (1983). Life Prints: New Patterns of Love and Work for Today's Women. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Cuplan, O., & Marzotta, T. (1982). Changing attitudes toward work and marriage. SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 8, 337-351.
- Garrison, H.H. (1979). Gender differences in the career aspirations of recent cohorts of high school seniors. Social Problems, 27, 170-185.
- Herzog, A.R. (1982). High school seniors' occupational plans and values: Trends in sex differences 1976 through 1980. Sociology of Education, 55, 1-13.
- Houseknecht, S. & Macke, A. (1976). Combining marriage and career: The marital adjustment of professional women. Journal of Marriage and Family, 38, 651-661.
- Hudis, P.M. (1981). Commitment to work and family: Marital status differences in women's earnings. Journal of Marriage and Family, 38, 276-278.
- Lueptow, L.B. (1980). Social change and sex role change in adolescent orientation toward life, work and achievement: 1964-1975. Social Psychology Quarterly, 53, 16-24.
- Mason, K., Czajka, J., & Arber, S. (1976). Change in U.S. women's sex role attitudes. American Sociological Review, 41, 573-596.
- Papanek, H. (1978). Men, women and work: Reflections on the two-person career. American Journal of Sociology, 78, 857-872.
- Waite, L. (1981). U.S. women at work. Population Bulletin, 36, no. 2.